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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Conditions in Burdarski Geran: Local Kolkhoz/
1952 and 1953 Harvests/Local Leaders/Political
Attitudes/Nearby Copper Mining

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

- "The village of Burdarski Geran is located near Byala Slatina in Vratsa Province. The nearest Danubian port is Oryakhovo, 28 km away. Our knowledge of Burdarski Geran dates through early August 1953.
Burdarski Geran Kolkhoz
- "The kolkhoz in Burdarski Geran is known as Trudovo Kooperativno Zemledelsku Stopanstvo Vasil Kolarov.
- "This kolkhoz was organized in autumn 1949. Following the agrarian reform of 1944-45 the largest area of land which a farmer might own was 200 decares (one decare = one-tenth hectare). There is only one kolkhoz in the village of Burdarski Geran. Bulgarian law prohibits kolkhozes exceeding an area of 25,000 decares. Some nearby villages in Vratsa Province have two, three or even five kolkhozes each.
- "When the kolkhoz was organized in Burdarski Geran all the farmers of the village were forced to join. The kulaks were evicted after two months as 'persons not contributing to the smooth operation of the kolkhoz'. This appeared to be a general policy throughout Bulgaria: when kolkhozes were organized the kulaks were invited to join -- and evicted shortly thereafter. The purpose was obvious: the liquidation of all kulaks. In Burdarski Geran there were about five kulaks, including Zahari Iliev, Stojan Vasilev and Todor Brahov. After their eviction these men continued to be persecuted. In the last agricultural year /1952 harvest/ each kulak was forced to pay a duty tax of 200,000 leva, which would be 8000 leva today /cf. currency reform of 10 May 52/. The state means to reduce the kulaks to complete impotence.

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5. "The kolkhoz in Burdarski Ieran has 700 members, of whom only 30 or 40 are members of the Communist Party. An inventory was made when the farmers joined the kolkhoz. Those who did not own agricultural equipment to offer the collective had to pay 2000 leva (in the old currency) for each decare of land handed over to the collective. However, no matter how many decares of land each farmer surrendered to the kolkhoz, he was entitled to retain five decares for his family to cultivate privately. (Our family group entered the kolkhoz with 115 decares of land, retaining five for our personal use.) When joining the kolkhoz each member had also to make a contribution for sowing: 11 kgs of corn [wheat], 200 gms of maize, 20 gms of beans, 20 kgs of straw and cereals.

6. "The kolkhoz possessed:

60-70 cows
four oxen
250 horses
700 sheep
200 pigs (small)
500 chickens
1200 hens
50 beehives.

7. "The kolkhoz uses agricultural machinery belonging to the MTS (Metorna Trakturna Stacija - Motor Tractor Station) in Byala Slatina. That machinery includes:

two Soviet-type combines
350 plows
four mechanical plows
five or six Stalince plows,
which plow 120-150 decares
of land per day
three or four Ford plows
some McCormick plows.

There is a serious shortage of spare parts for all the Soviet machinery at the MTS station.

8. "The kolkhoz controls its members through the regulation that those who do not perform the specified amount of work do not participate in the distribution of agricultural goods at the end of the agricultural year, after the harvest. The minimum number of working days which each kolkhoz member must devote to collective land to qualify for his distributive share is 120. A 'working day' is calculated not by hours but by norms. Some agricultural jobs are heavier than others (e.g., harvesting vs gardening) and require more time. It takes about two days of work to complete one 'working day'. If a farmer wanted to complete a full 'working day' in 24 hours, he would have to work uninterruptedly from six am to 10 pm. Work is obligatory for male members of the kolkhoz aged 15-60 and female members aged 15-55.

9. 1952 Harvest

"The 1952 agricultural year was disastrous for kolkhoz members due to the severe drought. The CP recruited many kolkhoz members for work in various factories in Vratsa Province; thus they fortunately could feed their families. According to the five-Year Plan and to the government's Agricultural Cultivation Plan, the kolkhoz in Burdarski Ieran must deliver to the State a quota of 500,000 kgs of corn per annum. The State takes no consideration of bad weather or drought; the kolkhoz must deliver. In 1952 the kolkhoz in Burdarski Ieran produced only 800,000 kgs of corn in all. Of this quantity, 500,000 kgs were delivered to state granaries. An additional 30,000 kgs were delivered to the MTS as payment for the use of agricultural machinery during the agricultural year. Ten per cent of the 800,000 kgs was turned over to the Social Aid Fund of the kolkhoz, i.e. for old or sick members

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and for the children. An additional 100,000 kgs were set aside as a sowing reserve for the coming agricultural year. Calculations for the 1952 agricultural year at the kolkhoz showed a total of 126,000 working days -- of course of the 780 members, some had done more days than others. Distribution of agricultural goods was based on the working days put in by each separate member. Our family group totaled 375 working days, for which we received:

Maize	- None
Sunflower seeds	- 10 gms per working day
Cheese	- 40 gms per working day
Wool	- 2 gms per working day
Beans	- 48 gms per working day.

And that was our meagre share for a full year of work on the collective farm.

10. "At the end of the agricultural year in 1952 the State paid the kolkhoz for the delivery of 500,000 kgs of corn at the rate of 0.45 leva per kg. Yet farmers were selling their private corn at the official rate of 2.40 leva per kg. However, no official fixed prices exist for the purchase of corn from kolkhozes, either for the purchase of the corn in the delivery quota or the corn sold by farmers directly. The price depends on the quality of the corn and on the quantity of corn the kolkhoz is able to produce. Obviously this leaves a loophole for the State to pay the kolkhozes a higher price for corn when it is scarce, in order to support them, than when it is plentiful, as in the current year (1953).

1953 Harvest

11. "The harvest looked much more promising for 1953. Each decare of land in the Buidarski Geron kolkhoz produced 400 kgs of corn. It is roughly estimated that each single member of the kolkhoz will get eight kgs of corn per working day. In the old days, when land was all individually owned, our own land produced normally 150 kgs of corn per decare. Nowadays this figure has increased to 300-400 kgs per decare because the land has been properly fertilized by artificial means -- an expense which the average individual farmer could not previously have afforded. If the harvest is good this year, the farmers will be well off. Before we left Bulgaria we had a total of 600 working days for the current agricultural year. The corn due us could be sold for about 5000 levas in cash, a substantial sum.
12. "Members of the kolkhoz, including kulaks [relation between this statement and paragraph 4 not explained], are permitted to buy goods from the kolkhoz collective. Sample prices:

Tomatoes	- 0.05 levas per kilo
Peppers	- 0.02 levas per kilo (so plentiful that children play with them)
Fresh beans	- 0.20 levas per kilo
Watermelons	- 0.50 levas per kilo
Lettuce	- 0.02 levas per kilo
Bread	- 1.96 - 4.20 levas per kilo, depending on quality
Kisselo Mleko (Yogurt)	- 1.20 levas per kilo
Milk (skimmed)	- 1.10 levas per liter
Eggs	- 0.60 each
Sugar	- 10.00 levas per kilo (sugar supply bad in the provinces, but in August we managed to buy 10 kg in Sofia without trouble)
Veal	- 6.00 levas per kilo.

There is a lack of money to buy clothing, which is expensive.

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13. "All agricultural work in the Burdarski Ieran kolkhoz during the current year (1953) was proceeding day and night, at non-stop pace, in three eight-hour shifts. There were 13 brigades of farmers, 40 in each. Each brigade had four leaders, who did the same work as the other farmers but were entitled to an additional two per cent in pay (in kind) at the end of the agricultural year. There were various types of brigades, eg. building, blacksmith, gardening, carpentry. The leaders ordered the day's work on the previous evening, by calling at the houses in the village and ordering the Bomonacialnik (head of the house) to be at such-and-such a place at a certain hour. Harvesting began in early July. The kolkhoz organized public kitchens in the fields which prepared three meals a day. However, deduction for the meals the farmers consumed was to be made at the end of the year in the distribution of goods. Normally the farmers eat bread and onions.

Local Leaders

14. "The leading persons in the kolkhoz and village of Burdarski Ieran are:

- (a) Dimiter Angeleff, elected May 1953 president of the supervisory committee of the kolkhoz. There are seven or eight men on this committee; Angeleff is 38, married, with two daughters - one about five. He used to be a gymnasium /high school/ teacher in Dupnitsa. He is a fanatic Communist.
- (b) Todor Parancov, secretary of the Bulgarian CP in the village. He is 39, a former Communist partisan. He lives in Burdarski Ieran, while his family live in Ruska Byala.
- (c) Zeko Zekov, president of the People's Board in the village. He is a farmer, aged 60, married, with children. A fanatic member of the CP.
- (d) Petar Blasev, member of the People's Board committee. Aged 45, a fanatic Communist. His duty on the People's Board is to arrange the roster of farmers for the special village and kolkhoz guard.

Night Patrols

15. "A special night patrol guard is organized now throughout all Bulgarian villages. It is part of the 'war psychosis' which the CP is fomenting in the minds of the people. The guards have been organized against 'political enemies of the regime'. In Burdarski Ieran, a total of 52 farmers are on duty each night. The service is known as na post. They are ordinary members of the kolkhoz, unarmed, who stand guard in the village streets and around the fields. Duty orders are transmitted through the various Bomonacialniks. The guards must request the identification papers of all travellers and inspect bags.

Political Attitudes and Indoctrination

16. "During 1953 the morale of the kolkhoz workers has been fairly good because they anticipate a good harvest and therefore a substantial distribution of goods at the end of the year. The farmers have the general political attitude of, 'Let's lower our heads and work hard, resigned to our fate'. When Stalin died the farmers were gathered for five minutes' silence, but there were no demonstrations or reaction in any part of Vratsa Province. Actually, we know of no reaction against the regime, since nobody has the courage to oppose it or to be a partisan. We have never heard of partisan activity in present-day Bulgaria. The farmers, at least in Burdarski Ieran, have been cut off from the West too long and have lost all hopes of liberation, certainly since collectivization was enforced in 1949. They try their best to adjust to Communism. The members of the kolkhoz receive compulsory political education twice a week: lessons in politics and in the Russian language. The only world news the farmers get comes in a local paper the 'Otocestveny Zof' ('Fatherland Voice'), which is edited and printed at Bratza. /Sic-Vratsa./ for circulation throughout the province. The farmers have no illusions about life in the kolkhoz. They are obviously not pleased with it, but do nothing against it. They rarely take their orders -- and pray for good weather so that crops will be plentiful. The farmers are fully aware of two facts:

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(a) They are no longer landowners. True, the State has increased the productivity of the soil. But that is meagre consolation for the loss of individuality.

(b) They are at the mercy of Nature. The State provides nothing if it is a bad agricultural year, as in 1952.

An old proverb still goes around the Burdarski Geran kolkhoz: 'Bogata drzhava - sastoitelni grashdanini' (Rich state - poor farmers'). The farmers have adopted it as the kolkhoz slogan.

17. "Loudspeakers have been installed at street corners in the village. Naturally only Bulgarian radio stations are heard. The only legitimate radio sets existing in Burdarski Geran and in Vratsa Province (and we believe this holds true for most of Bulgaria) are the various loudspeakers which have been distributed to farmers. In 1949 an indirect measure was enforced to halt reception of Western stations. Farmers owning radio sets were invited to turn in their old sets for a newly distributed loudspeaker. There is a radio re-broadcast station in the local post office at Vratsa. The post office chooses which Bulgarian stations to re-broadcast, and farmers are 'free' to switch their loudspeakers on or off. Thus, contact with the West is completely cut off. Nobody listens to Western stations in the province of Vratsa even if a man should own a set, the risk would not be worth it. There are probably people in the large towns who listen secretly to Western programs.

18. "A huge movie theatre is under construction in Burdarski Geran. It is costing the State 10 million levas. It is a large modern structure which will contain special rooms for the schoolteachers of the district, as well as a library and a culture hall. The building brigade has been working on this building night and day, in the same way as they have been building new stables for the kolkhoz.

Religion

19. "The entire village of Burdarski Geran is Roman Catholic. There used to be two churches, one Catholic and one Protestant. The latter was closed after the repatriation of all Germans from the village during World War II. There is still an old Roman Catholic priest in the village, Father (fmu) Metodiev, aged 65-66. He has never suffered persecution, probably because he is too old and has never interfered in politics. People still attend mass, but only the old people, mostly women. All the young people of the village are members of CP youth organizations and thus forbidden to attend.

Copper Mining

20. "Many of the copper mines in Vratsa Province are being reactivated. There are some at Mezdra in the Vidin area which belonged formerly to an Italian who has been repatriated to Italy. Those mines are working day and night, three eight-hour shifts.

Military Activity

21. "We saw no troops in the province of Vratsa. We saw only Soviet civilians in Sofia when we visited there at the beginning of August 1953. Bulgarian military service is now three years.

Exit Visas

22. "Alien residents of Burdarski Geran need a special permit, issued by the Militia of the area, to travel to Sofia."

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